

Message Text

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SUBJ CIVAIR: NEW TORONTO AIRPORT NOT TO BE BUILT

REFS OTTAWA 620; A-149, MARCH 7, 1975

1. GOC PLANS TO BUILD A NEW TORONTO INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT AT PICKERING, EAST OF THE CITY, HAVE BEEN AT LEAST INDEFINITELY DEFERRED AND PERHAPS CANCELED. TRANSPORT MINISTER MARCHAND ANNOUNCED ON SEPTEMBER 25 (ONE DAY AFTER AN ONTARIO CABINET DECISION TO OPPOSE ITS CONSTRUCTION AND TO REFUSE TO SERVICE THE 17,000 ACRE SITE WITH A TRANSIT SYSTEM, ROADS, SEWERS AND WATER LINES) THE GOC WOULD NOT PROCEED ALONE WITH CONSTRUCTION OF THE AIRPORT AND THAT ALL WORK ON THE SITE WOULD CEASE IMMEDIATELY.

2. ONTARIO'S ACTION WITH WITHIN CONTEXT OF LONG SIMMERING DEBATE WITH FEDERAL GOVERNMENT OVER COST SHARING ON SUPPORT ITEMS (ESTIMATED COST \$400 MILLION, IN ADDITION TO PERHAPS \$1 BILLION IN FEDERAL EXPENDITURE FOR FULLY DEVELOPED FACILITY) AS WELL AS HIGHLY VOCAL OPPOSITION TO PROJECT (EVEN ON LIMITED SCALE ANNOUNCED LAST FEBRUARY) FROM ENVIRONMENTALIST AND OTHER CIVIC GROUPS. FINAL ONTARIO POSITION APPEARS BASED ON ITS DETERMINATION THAT NEED FOR AIRPORT NO
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LONGER EXISTS, IN CONTRAST TO ITS EARLIER VIEW THAT

SUCH A DETERMINATION WAS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF OTTAWA ALONE. ONTARIO TRANSPORT MINISTER RHODES IS QUOTED IN PRESS AS SAYING THERE IS ALSO NO NEED FOR FURTHER EXPANSION OF EXISTING MALTON AIRPORT WHICH IS CONSIDERED HEAVILY CONGESTED.

3. MARCHAND INDICATED MOT STILL BELIEVES SECOND AIRPORT WILL BE NEEDED BY 1979 DESPITE RECENT DECLINES IN AIR PASSENGER GROWTH. CONSEQUENTLY, THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT WILL RETAIN OWNERSHIP OF THE 17,000 ACRES IT HAS ACQUIRED AND LEASE IT OUT FOR FARMING FOR TWO OR THREE YEARS "TO SEE IF ONTARIO CHANGES ITS MIND". MARCHAND ALSO INDICATED HE WOULD REQUEST ONTARIO TO MAINTAIN THE AGRICULTURAL ZONING OF THE LAND SURROUNDING THE SITE TO PREVENT URBAN DEVELOPMENT THAT WOULD PRECLUDE CONSTRUCTION OF THE AIRPORT AT A FUTURE DATE. MONTREAL GAZETTE QUOTES AIR CANADA SPOKESMAN NOT FULLY SUPPORTING MARCHAND BY INDICATING CARRIER'S TRAFFIC FORECASTS SHOW NO REQUIREMENT IN NEAR FUTURE FOR A SECOND TORONTO AIRPORT.

4. COMMENT: SUSPENSION OF THE PICKERING AIRPORT PROJECT, ESPECIALLY IF NO MORE IMPROVEMENTS ARE MADE AT MALTON, WILL UNDOUBTEDLY INCREASE CONGESTION THERE AND MAY INHIBIT GOC ABILITY GRANT TORONTO RIGHTS IN FUTURE BILATERAL NEGOTIATIONS WITH FOREIGN COUNTRIES. UNLESS FOREIGN CARRIERS CAN SEE PROFITABLE OPERATIONS FROM MINOR CANADIAN CITIES (ESPECIALLY SUCH POINTS AS WINDSOR AND OTHER LOCATIONS CLOSE TO US BORDER), AIR CANADA'S EXPANSION PLANS ABROAD MAY BE FRUSTRATED.

5. NEW MONTREAL AIRPORT AT MIRABEL OPENS NEXT MONTH. PRESS IS FULL OF REPORTS EMPHASIZING FRUSTRATIONS OF INTERNATIONAL AIRLINES OVER MOVING PROBLEMS, LACK OF DOMESTIC CONNECTIONS THERE, AND INADEQUATE GROUND ACCESS TO LOCATION THIRTY-FOUR MILES NORTH OF CITY. THERE IS, FURTHERMORE, CONSIDERABLE QUESTIONING OF WISDOM OF DECISION TEN YEARS AGO TO BUILD THIS FACILITY IN LIGHT OF CURRENT TRAFFIC TRENDS. WHATEVER ELSE MAY HAPPEN FAILURE TO GO AHEAD WITH PICKERING SHOULD INCREASE UTILIZATION

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OF MIRABEL IN EARLY 1980'S AND MAY RESTORE MONTREAL TO ITS PREVIOUS OVERWHELMING ROLE AS CANADA'S EASTERN INTERNATIONAL GATEWAY. SUCH UTILIZATION OF MIRABEL MAY ALSO STIMULATE GOC EVEN MORE TO CONCENTRATE RESOURCES ON HIGH SPEED GROUND TRANSPORTATION SYSTEMS TO MEET NEEDS OF WINDSOR-QUEBEC CORRIDOR AND IN PROCESS DRASTICALLY IMPROVE OVER LONG TERM ACCESSIBILITY OF METRO TORONTO TO MIRABEL. THIS WOULD ALSO FIT IN

WELL WITH ONTARIO GOVERNMENT'S TRANSPORT STRATEGY WHICH IS SEEKING LESS RELIANCE ON JET AIRCRAFT IN FAVOR OF RAIL MOVEMENTS WITHIN THE PROVINCE AS WELL AS ITS INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES IN THE TRANSPORT EQUIPMENT FIELD.

6. COPIES OF MARCHAND ANNOUNCEMENT BEING FORWARDED TO STATE (OA RIMAS), CAB (LITTON), FAA (JETT) AND DOT (BRONEZ).
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